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WILDLIFE REPORT

EASTERN SHORE PROJECT, FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION,
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FEBRUARY, 1938

By ERNEST A. VAUGHN, *Game Technician*

Food And Cover Provision

AS SOME CLEARED LAND is essential for the existence of most species of wildlife, our most difficult problem has been to create permanent clearings over an area of nearly 7,600 acres, of which 5 per cent is allotted to wildlife. From an economic standpoint, the conversion of old homestead, barnyard and saw mill sites to permanent game food patches seemed advisable, due to the rich soil found thereon. As only about 50 of these sites are found on the entire area, other permanent clearings have been established along the margins of old fields and

ditch banks which furnish excellent cover. Eighty clearings of one-half to two acres have been created in open woodland. Two hundred and thirty-two game food patches of sericea lespedeza, red and alsyke clover, partridge peas, cow peas, buckwheat and corn were planted in 1937. All permanent clearings and roads in open woodland were disced to encourage the growth of various weeds and wild legumes and to aid in the control of forest fires. Ten thousand game food trees and shrubs were planted at salient points on the margin of cleared areas. Fifteen miles of ditches were cleaned, thereby improving the environment of upland game. All den trees are preserved, but not marked. The



Same Field in 1937 Voluntarily Seeded in Partridge Pea.



Game Feed Patch Disced and Ready to Seed to Partridge Pea.



Same Field in Late Summer. Sage Grass Growing on Left of a Vigorous Stand of Partridge Pea.

preservation of evergreen shrub growth and ground cover is practiced by timber stand improvement crews.

Release Cuttings

Food-producing trees, shrubs and vines are plentiful only on certain areas and where found were generally in need of release. Wild crab apple, persimmon, hickory, dogwood, strawberry bush, viburnum and wild grape are most abundant on the clay soil near the Pocomoke River. On the sandy soil types, wild plum, persimmon, hickory, wild grape, chokeberry and wild cherry predominate. Although summer fruits are abundant over the entire area, more fruits that hold on during the winter are needed to supply food for the increase in game. By releasing game food-producing trees, shrubs and vines on 200 acres of land bordering fields, roads and also groups found in timber stands, more winter fruits will be available.

Nursery

A nursery constructed for propagation of native wild food producing trees,

shrubs, vines and legumes. The following species were planted in 1937: Strawberry bush, arrowwood, hawthorn, chokeberry, Roman grape, frost grape, shadblow, persimmon, contoneaster, elderberry, wild crab apple, rynchosia erecta, wild lespedeza, tick trefoil, lespedeza (sericea), wild vetch, butterfly pea and milk pea. Most of this stock will be transplanted to the field in 1938.

Seed Collection

The following list of seeds were collected in 1937. Partridge peas, 334 lbs.; sericea lespedeza, 400 lbs.; milk peas, 3 lbs.; also small quantities of butterfly peas, wild bean, bull grass, wild vetch and wild lespedeza.

Cooperation Desired

1. Early in 1936 it was realized that to develop this area for wildlife, the cooperation of the State Game Department of Maryland, as well as the farmer whose lands bounded Federal owned lands, was



Four-year-old Stand of Sericea Lespedeza on Block 2. This $\frac{3}{4}$ -Acre Game Feed Patch Produced 400 lbs. of Unhulled Seed in 1937.



Young Persimmon Grove Located on the Edge of a Permanent Cleared Area on Block 4.

desired. The first step was to acquaint the adjacent landowner with our wildlife program and seek his cooperation by planting a food patch near good cover so that he might hold his present supply of game that otherwise might become attracted to a superior environment on government land and also to create an environment that would attract the overflow. The Maryland State Game Department has most generously supplied the necessary seed for the past two years. One hundred and twenty-nine farmers residing close to Federal lands in Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset Counties planted game food patches in 1937. Through the county agent, 64 members of 4-H Clubs in Wicomico County also planted food patches to stand over the winter. On October 30, 1937, a Tri-County 4-H Club rally was held at the Milbourne Landing Recreation Area. One hundred and thirty-five boys attended and plans were formulated by the county agents and district deputy game wardens of the respective counties for some worthwhile game management among 4-H Club boys. A tour of the Farm Security Ad-

ministration project completed the day's outing.

Fine Environment for Quail and Doves

2. Two State game propagation areas have recently been enclosed with a single strand of nine gauge wire. One area, known as the old Furnace Refuge, is located near the old Furnace Tower, south of the Nassawango Creek which has an area of 304 acres. In 1930 a devastating fire swept this tract killing most of the timber. A scattered mixed stand of loblolly pine and hardwood now covers this light sandy area where most every wild legume known in the southeast has been found, making it an exceptionally fine environment for bob-white quail and mourning dove. Fifteen small clearings within the enclosure are seeded to various wild legumes. The second area, known as the Pocomoke River Refuge, contains 624 acres and is located along the north bank of the Pocomoke River about midway between Snow Hill and Pocomoke City. One-third of the area is swampland which

contains many raccoon and grey squirrel den trees. Evidence of otter has been seen at three points on this refuge. Cottontail rabbit, quail, woodcock and mourning dove are found to be quite abundant. A few muskrat, mink and opossum are present, as well as black and wood ducks. The grey fox has become a serious predator on both refuges, affecting chiefly the cottontail rabbit. A planting of ten wild turkeys was made on the Pocomoke Refuge on November 21, 1936. Two months later the remains of four birds which had been taken by fox were found. Scratching signs were seen at different points on the feeding range until about May 1. No more signs were noted until September 16, when the tracks of one adult and an immature bird were seen in a sandy road. Late in November, 1937, feeding signs and tracks of a single bird were seen about one and one-half miles south of the point of release.

Present Conditions Of Wildlife

Since 1935 there has been a substantial increase in most species of wildlife native

to this section. Bob-white quail have set the pace, with an increase of from 18 coveys in the winter of 1935-36 to 68 coveys in 1937-38 (see "Quail Management in Maryland"—by Kenneth A. Wilson). A greatly improved environment, plus favorable nesting and breeding seasons, undoubtedly is the answer. Despite its many enemies, the cottontail rabbit seems to increase in numbers, as signs are evident over the entire area. The largest concentrations are found near clover patches and wild crab apple groves. In February they are feeding on green briar, sumac, blackberry, wild crab apple, strawberry bush, hawthorn and other shrub and sprout growth. As in other parts of the lower Eastern Shore, the pheasant has failed to adapt itself to local conditions. A few birds are found adjacent to the dividing creek swamp which has been stocked by the State Game Department. The releasing of numerous hickory, oak, beech, dogwood and other important food-producing trees has increased the grey squirrel population along the Pocomoke River and Dividing Creek which offers an ideal habitat for this popular little game animal. Only



Discing of Sage Grass to Encourage the Growth of Quail Food and Cover.



Ragweeds, Smartweeds and Partridge Peas Following the Discing of Sage.



This Field was Disced in 1936 to Cut up a Heavy Growth of Sage Grass.

small areas are found elsewhere on this project that furnish a suitable environment, as food trees are either immature or void due to recent timber operations. Mourning doves are found most abundant among the scattered young pine and hardwood of the old Furnace Refuge. Several flocks of over 25 birds each were seen one November day feeding in food patches of milk pea, ground bean and partridge pea.

Woodcock Hunting Favorite Sport

To many of the old timers of this section, woodcock hunting is the favorite sport. These birds have been feeding in the swamplands since the migration last fall, probably due to the mild winter. As the upper Pocomoke River has little marshland along its banks, few ducks are attracted except during periods of extreme cold weather, although this project is located only seven miles west of the Chincoteague Bay which is noted for large concentrations of ducks and geese.

Most important and plentiful of fur-

bearers on this area is the raccoon. Probably no section of the Eastern Shore offers a superior habitat for the raccoon than the Pocomoke River swamp and its branches. Much has been done to maintain a permanent environment for this valuable animal whose worst enemy in this section is the trapper.

The first skunk reported in Worcester County was caught by coon hunters along the Nassawango Creek last November.

As yet no signs of deer have been seen on this area, although they are known to be only a few miles north.

Predator control has been left to the administering agency of this project. A condition now exists that requires some intelligent work in that line.

As a safety measure for the men working on the project, hunting has not been encouraged since 1935. It is hoped that the sportsmen will soon enjoy the benefits of game management. Development work is nearly complete on all land west of the Pocomoke River. Only a few tracts that were recently acquired remain to be worked.



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